

STRIKERS EARN WANDERERS' FIRST BONUS

ROTHMANS Isthmian League champions Wycombe Wanderers collected their first £40 goal bonus on Saturday when they outgunned Walthamstow Avenue 5-2 at Green Pond Lane. Blues' fans have waited a long time to see their side in full flow and on this occasion they were not disappointed.

There were times on Saturday when Wycombe's football matched anything they produced last term when they won the title. Their third goal, for instance, was a classic piece of footballing skill and overall, the team looked a completely different outfit from the one that lost 3-0 to the Rest of the League last Tuesday. True, there was far more at stake but even so, every one of the team worked to make this convincing victory possible.

By **STUART EARP** Walthamstow Avenue 2, Wycombe Wanderers 5

It would be easy to get carried away after Saturday but it must be stated that Avenue were an extremely weak side. Their defence looked woefully suspect at times while their midfield trio, including former Tottenham first teamer Jimmy Pearce, just weren't allowed into the match by their visiting counterparts.

It's quite a time since Wycombe scored five goals in a league match and much of the blame for their mediocre start to the season has rested on the forwards. Against Avenue, the front three scored four of the goals and looked an extremely dangerous combination. Geoff Anthony, who has been slow in recent matches, came right back to form with two goals and might well have had a hat-trick had he not had to go off with a cut knee.

Other stars on Saturday were

Mick Holfield who showed a marked improvement and Keith Mead, whose consistency borders on the remarkable.

Wanderers, still without goalkeeper John Maskell, brought in Tony Price as substitute and found themselves a goal down after only seven minutes. John Knapman picking up a clearance and lobbing over Dave Bullock in goal who was caught fractionally off his line. Dave, who was between the posts in the corresponding game last year, saved Wycombe soon afterwards with a point blank stop from Knapman.

The Blues had what looked like a 'justifiable appeal for a handball penalty turned down before they equalised with a soft goal by courtesy of goalkeeper Dave Townsend. He allowed a Tony Horseman free kick to slip under his body after 'Bodger'

bent the ball around a defensive wall. That came after 15 minutes and three minutes later Dave Alexander, who again impressed in midfield, was desperately unlucky when his measured shot struck the woodwork.

With Pearce offering very little from midfield, Wycombe made this department their own and began to string some useful attacks together. Walthamstow, however, were far from beaten yet and Bullock only just recovered in time to stop Hook's header rolling over the line after 26 minutes.

The Blues second goal came in the 33rd minute. Avenue were slow to clear the ball inside their own box and after Horseman had seen a shot blocked, Anthony fired the ball low and hard across the goalface for Holfield to hook home at the far post.

Avenue hit back with six corners before half time but one beautiful move involving Holfield, Anthony and Horseman, which ended with the latter shooting just too high, augured well for the second half.

Mead was soon in action after the break, clearing off the line from Alan Hunter's header and then going upfield for a corner at the other end and shooting just wide after a John Delaney knock-down. Delaney caused a good deal of trouble with his height at set pieces.

The best goal of the seven came in the 57th minute — the sweetest goal Wanderers have scored this season. Three passes were strung together before Anthony chipped through for Dylan Evans to run on and clip a perfect shot wide of the 'keeper without a Walthamstow player touching the ball. Now three up,

Wanderers went on the rampage and tore the home defence to ribbons with some delightful passing. Under such pressure Avenue looked certain to crack again and after 63 minutes Anthony increased the lead with another fine goal. A poor clearance from defence fell to the Welshman and taking the ball past one defender, he sent a cheeky lob over Townsend and into the net.

Although they held what looked like an impregnable 4-1 lead, Wycombe brought back memories of their 4-3 defeat at Slough when they allowed Avenue another goal in the 69th minute, Hunter turning in Jackson's low cross. This gave the home side new heart and for a time, they looked capable of hauling themselves back into the game. But a gift goal in the 77th minute sealed their fate and shattered any dreams of a comeback.

Goalkeeper Townsend went for Martin Smith, making his debut, to pass back but he delayed too long and when he did eventually try and find his 'keeper, he only succeeded in throwing Townsend off balance. Anthony was lurking for any such slip. As Townsend dived to smother the ball, Geoff stuck out a boot and watched as the ball rolled slowly over the line. Two minutes later Anthony was replaced by Price, having given his best performance of the season to date.

AVENUE: D. Townsend; J. Knapman, T. Blackin, M. Smith, R. Bradford; A. Gough, B. Jackson, J. Pearce; K. Hook (sub. J. Ward 68 mins.), A. Hunter, R. Sedgwick.

WYCOMBE: D. Bullock; P. Bideya, K. Mead, J. Delaney, R. Easton, D. Alexander, T. Reardon, M. Holfield; A. Horseman, D. Evans, G. Anthony (sub. A. Price 79 mins.).

Referee: D. Patten (Yatley).
Half-time: 1-2. **Goalscorers:** Wycombe — Horseman (15), Holfield (33), Evans (57), Anthony 2 (63, 77).